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Sexual Assault: What You Should Know About the SAFE Exam

Filed under [COMMUNITY SUPPORT](#), [PUBLIC HEALTH](#), [SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS AND PREVENTION](#) (NO COMMENTS)

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Lt. Cmdr. Linda Huber, director, health services, Naval Health Clinic Quantico, is a trained Sexual Assault Forensics Examiner. (Courtesy photo)

What do you do if someone says they are having chest pain? Most bystanders will immediately call 911.

Now, what do you do if your shipmate or loved one says that they have been sexually assaulted? This is a true emergency and requires that same level of immediate response and care.

Navy Medicine has the ability to perform Sexual Assault Forensic Examinations (SAFE) at all of their 24 hour medical treatment facilities and during working hours at the branch medical clinics.


SAFE is offered as an option by the Victim Advocate following a sexual assault. Patients are cleared medically of life threatening conditions prior to initiating a SAFE. A SAFE can take four to six hours to perform. A SAFE provider will perform a full physical exam, which includes collecting evidence (DNA and toxicology labs) and photographing all injuries. Research shows that programs with trained examiners, such as Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFEs), using modern standards like those in the Department of Justice (DOJ) SAFE Protocol significantly increase evidence collection and investigation in sexual assault cases. Better evidence collection results in significantly higher prosecution rates, convictions,

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and guilty-pleas.



The SAFE Protocol also helps medical professionals conduct exams that are sensitive, dignified, and reduce trauma. Today, Navy Medicine has 917 providers trained to conduct SAFE according to DOJ National Protocol standards. These providers include nurse practitioners, registered nurses, physicians, independent duty corpsman, and physician assistants.

Best thing you can do as a bystander is to know your available resources. Resources that will help sexual assault survivors from door to recovery include medical providers, behavior health providers, Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARC), Victim Advocates (VA), Victims' Legal Counsel (VLC), Chaplains, Military Leadership, and Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS). The worst thing you can do is to ignore a sexual assault. Know where your resources are and be able to act effectively if you ever encounter someone who has been injured by sexual assault!

For more information on becoming a trained SAFE provider, contact your MTF SAFE Program Manager. The SAFE DOJ National Protocol can be accessed at www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ovw/241903.pdf. And for more information on Navy efforts to stop sexual assault visit http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/21st_century_sailor/sapr/Pages/default2.aspx

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